



## The impact of emotions on learning in academic service-learning

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### Summary

Recent cognitive research has demonstrated the interconnectedness of emotions and learning (Felten, Gilchrist, & Darby, 2006). Academic service-learning (AS-L) is regarded as a high impact practice that crosses disciplinary lines and can be “life-changing” for students (National Survey of Student Engagement, 2010, p. 22; Eyler, Giles, & Braxton 1997). However, little research has explored possible connections between emotions and AS-L experiences. Using a mixed-method approach, researchers explore how AS-L students learn through classroom and community experiences, which are mediated by unique cognitive and emotional processes.

The main framework of this study is Pekrun’s (2006) control-value of emotions theory, which posits that the perceived control over and value of an activity are “central to the arousal of achievement emotions” and that emotions play a functional role in the learning process (p. 315). Pekrun (2006) also notes that

the reciprocally causal relationship between emotions and achievement can create either positive or negative feedback loops in the environment-appraisal-emotion-achievement outcome cycle.

Researchers predict that positive activating emotions (e.g., hopefulness) and mastery-oriented goals will positively impact academic achievement; negative activating emotions (e.g., anxiety), and performance-based goals will have mixed effects; and negative deactivating emotions (e.g., boredom) will negatively predict academic achievement, regardless of the goal type (Daniels et al., 2009; Pekrun et al., 2010). We also predict that students' initial attitude related to their AS-L class and site placement will influence their subsequent goal adoption and discrete emotions, which together impact achievement.

Researchers used Pekrun et al.'s (2010) Achievement Emotions Questionnaire (AEQ) with our AS-L section. Students enrolled in AS-L classes completed the questionnaires and participated in open-ended interviews. To analyze the data, a statistical analysis on the AEQ responses was performed while transcribing and coding the interviews to identify recurrent themes using an inductive approach (Boeije, 2010). Data were interpreted in the context of existing literature on AS-L, academic achievement, and emotions, specifically that related to Pekrun's (2006) control-value theory of emotions.

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